

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A process for making chewing gum comprising the steps of:

using a single continuous mixing apparatus to perform all of the addition and compounding steps necessary to produce gum base;

adding to the single continuous mixing apparatus all of a group of components necessary to make a chewing gum base including an elastomer and a plasticizer, wherein the elastomer is added to the single continuous mixing apparatus separate and apart from the plasticizer and the elastomer is not preblended or pretreated prior to the addition to the single continuous mixing apparatus;

providing at least two mixing zones in the mixing apparatus;

producing gum base from the mixing apparatus; and

mixing the gum base with other ingredients to produce chewing gum.

Claim 2 (original): The continuous process of Claim 1 wherein the at least two mixing zones include a distributive mixing zone and a dispersive mixing zone.

Claim 3 (original): The continuous process of Claim 1 wherein an elastomer and a filler are fed into the mixing apparatus before other components of the chewing gum base.

Claim 4 (original): The continuous process of Claim 1 wherein the mixing apparatus includes a first dispersive mixing zone.

Claim 5 (original): The continuous process of Claim 1 wherein the mixing apparatus is a high efficiency mixer.

Claim 6 (original): The continuous process of Claim 1 wherein the mixing apparatus includes a blade-and-pin mixer.

Claim 7 (original): The continuous process of Claim 1 wherein the process is carried out in a counter-rotating, intermeshing twin screw extruder.

Claim 8 (original): The continuous process of Claim 1 wherein the mixing apparatus includes a plurality of toothed elements counter-rotating with respect to adjacent toothed elements.

Claim 9 (original): The continuous process of Claim 1 wherein the gum base components are added to the mixing apparatus at least two spatially separated points.

Claim 10 (original): The continuous process of Claim 1 wherein a portion of the chewing gum base components are subjected to a highly dispersive mixing operation prior to a highly distributive mixing operation.

Claim 11 (original): The continuous process of Claim 1 wherein the adding and mixing steps are controlled to operate at a steady state.

Claim 12 (original): The continuous process of Claim 1 wherein at least some of the components are added to the mixing apparatus at different locations in an order that approximately corresponds to a decreasing order of viscosity.

Claim 13 (currently amended): A process for producing chewing gum comprising the steps of:

using a single extruder to perform all necessary addition and compounding steps to produce gum base;

adding to the single extruder all of a group of components necessary to make a gum base including an elastomer and a plasticizer, wherein the elastomer is added to the extruder separate and apart from the plasticizer and the elastomer is not preblended or pretreated prior to the addition to the single continuous mixing apparatus;

mixing the components in the single extruder;

producing the gum base using the single extruder; and

adding the gum base to other ingredients to make chewing gum.

Claim 14 (original): The continuous process of Claim 13 wherein an elastomer and a filler are fed into the extruder before other components of the gum base.

Claim 15 (original): The continuous process of Claim 13 wherein the extruder includes a first dispersive mixing zone.

Claim 16 (original): The continuous process of Claim 13 wherein the extruder is a high efficiency mixer.

Claim 17 (original): The continuous process of Claim 13 wherein the extruder includes a blade-and-pin mixer.

Claim 18 (original): The continuous process of Claim 13 wherein the process is carried out in a counter-rotating, intermeshing twin screw extruder.

Claim 19 (currently amended): A process for making chewing gum in a continuous chewing gum production line comprising the steps of:

using a single extruder to perform all of the addition and compounding steps necessary to produce a gum base;

adding to the single extruder components necessary to make a gum base the components including an elastomer and a plasticizer, wherein the elastomer is added to the single continuous mixing apparatus separate and apart from the plasticizer and the elastomer is not preblended or pretreated prior to the addition to the single continuous mixing apparatus;

producing gum base from the single extruder;

adding the gum base to water-soluble ingredients; and

mixing the chewing gum base and water-soluble ingredients to produce chewing gum.

Claim 20 (original): The continuous process of Claim 19 wherein an elastomer and a filler are fed into the extruder before other components of the gum base.